

WORDING FOR PRESENTATION SLIDES

Slide	Information
1	<p>Just quickly for the benefit for those of you who may not be clear as to exactly where Community Park is – it is the area of amenity land below Canada Woods, adjacent to the houses at Beechwood, and is designated as a ‘Local Green Space’ in the Market Lavington Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
2	<p>It is rather an irregular shaped piece of land, with the river meandering through the bottom of the site and was formed from the spoil left by the builders, which has settled over time, to create this rather uneven and undulating surface that we are left with now.</p> <p>The area can be accessed from both ends via footpath MLAV2 and has the potential to become a wonderful space for all ages of the community to make use of and enjoy.</p>
3	<p>The Parish Council have been presented with a petition which as of the 4<sup>th</sup> of March included 177 signatures. In the background information it refers to the perceived limited public consultation regarding the planning and development of the Community Orchard and in particular its location at Community Park ..... with the action petitioned for being <b><i>a halt in any further progress with the community orchard, to include, but not limited to, the planting of any trees/hedges/shrubbery, whilst a full and transparent consultation with the parishioners is conducted; this will include, but not limited to, leaflet drops and questionnaires. Any future plans for the amenity land adjacent to Beech Close (also referred to as ‘Community Park’) must incorporate the wishes of the parishioners, whom will be consulted continually as planning for the area changes and progresses.</i></b></p> <p>The question asking what public consultation has already been conducted, and what responses were received has also been raised separately prior to the meeting.</p> <p>In preparation for this meeting, we have published a background document which was included on the Parish Council website, to accompany the agenda, which provided details of the discussions and community engagement regarding Community Park over the last 3 years, and here is a brief overview summarizing that document.</p>
4	<p><b>It all started back In April 2021</b> when the Parish Council received a letter from a local resident suggesting a possible project for the village as a way of marking the Covid-19 pandemic in a sensitive and reflective way. This vision, which the Parish Council supported, included the idea of involving the whole community to be part of the project, with a nucleus of people forming a working group to steer and oversee it. A copy of the letter was published in the June edition of the magazine, on the</p>

noticeboard, website and Facebook page to generate community support, and inviting members of the local community to come forward with ideas of locations and features, to be on the project committee, or to offer help. Volunteers were then invited along to the July Parish Council meeting where further ideas were suggested, and consideration was given as to how best proceed with the project. Following the article in the magazine, ideas started trickling in from the local community for projects in various locations within the village, which included Canada Woods, the Bubbling Kettle, and the amenity land below, along with offers of help. A working Group was duly formed, with their first meeting being held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. At that meeting direct reference was made to the grass area below Canada Woods, along with the need to involve the whole community, including the organisations that operate in the village and the young people, for further community engagement.

Over the next few months, the project started to gather momentum, and the idea was put forward for a larger project within Canada Woods and on the Amenity grass area adjacent to Beechwood.

**In February 2022** a further article was placed in the magazine, on the Marketplace noticeboard, Facebook and the Parish Council website entitled – ‘Your Parish Council needs YOU’ what would you like to see happen to enhance Canada Woods and the nearby area of amenity land? This article resulted in further ideas being put forward, which were shared with Councillors at the Parish Council meeting in February.

**In May 2022** at the Annual Parish Meeting display boards were on show detailing the ideas and suggestions put forward by the local community to date for Canada Woods and the amenity land area, including a feed from the new dedicated website. The meeting provided the opportunity for anyone to talk with the Working Group members, and attendees were encouraged to make further suggestions and comments for the area. The display boards remained in the Old School along with a sheet for people to note any suggestions for sometime after the meeting, and were available to access during library opening times, or if attending any of the regular user groups.

5 **In May 2023** at both the Annual Parish Meeting and the Coronation Volunteering, event display boards were again on show detailing the ideas and suggestions put forward by the local community to date for Canada Woods and the amenity land area, there was the opportunity to chat with Working Group members and make further comments and suggestions.

All three of these meetings which provided further opportunity for the public to engage with the Parish Council regarding ideas for Community Park would have been advertised in the Magazine, on the notice board, Parish Council website, and Facebook page.

6	<p>With significant tree management work due to take place in Canada Woods it had already been recognised that implementation of any ideas for the Amenity area would need to be held back until after this work had been completed, as the area would be required for storage and access.</p> <p>In the meantime, work was carried out in June 2023 on part of footpath MLAV2 just down from the amenity land to reinforce the riverbank where part of the footpath was eroding away into the water. In response to one of the other ideas put forward by the community for a dipping platform, a slipway into the water was also created at the same time to make the area more usable and accessible.</p> <p>Phase 1 of the tree management work was completed in October 2023, meaning consideration could then be given to implementing ideas put forward for the Amenity land.</p> <p><b>In September 2023</b> the Tree Wardens asked two questions via Facebook to gauge the level of support for a Community Orchard in the village. Whilst no specific location for the orchard was mentioned at that time, there was clear positive interest for the idea, with 80+ positive comments, 19 volunteers offering to work on the orchard, 6 committee member volunteers coming forward, and 2 offers of expertise help.</p>
7	<p>As detailed, there have been many attempts to engage our community over the last 3 years, and this table provides a summary of the 35 ideas which have been put forward to date for Community Park</p> <p>Back in October, when the opportunity arose through the Tree Warden scheme for an application to be submitted to the Tree Council for grant funding, to enable realisation of the idea for a Community Orchard on the Community Park site, the Parish Council took the decision to support the application, as the first step in improving this valuable community space.</p> <p>The newly formed Community Group having access to more funding streams than the Parish Council recognise the potential of the Orchard fulfilling many of the funding criteria for future projects in Canada Woods and Community Park, such as accessible footpaths, improving drainage etc.</p> <p>Whilst it is recognised that the perception may be that the Community Orchard is a new idea which has been pushed through with little regard to public opinion, we hope that we have been able to demonstrate that this is not the case, but rather it is a project (along with many other ideas) which has evolved over a period of 3 years of community engagement, and as per some of the other comments we have received, does have the support of many people in the local community.</p> <p>Can we please reassure you that it has never been the intention of the Parish Council to actively replace areas which children play in with an orchard instead.</p>

8	<p>So exactly what is the Community Orchard likely to look like? – A lot of research has been undertaken, with support from the Tree Council, Wiltshire Council Tree Warden department, and specialist suppliers to choose the trees for the Orchard. The Orchard will comprise of 19 fruit trees, 14 of which will be planted parallel with the fencing on the right-hand side of the site, 5 metres apart, across 3 rows, with a central space in the middle for possible seating, picnics etc. The remaining 5 trees will be planted in a row on the Canada Woods side of the site adjacent to the footpath. The Orchard will consist of a variety of fruit trees from semi-vigorous rootstocks, including pears, plums, cherries, Asian pears, eating and cooking apples, and gage. As they grow the trees will be carefully pruned to maintain their shape, height and spread (somewhere between a maximum of 4-5 metres tall). As you can see from the plan, there will still be plenty of un-used open space on the left-hand side of the site for children to play and other recreational activities, and the young trees will be protected with stakes and wire, to ensure that the area around the trees themselves will also be accessible and usable.</p>
9	<p>Before we go any further, could we please just take a moment to step back and remind ourselves of the aims, vision, and objectives for Community Park –</p> <p><b>Starting with the three objectives detailed in the Market Lavington Neighbourhood Plan: A document, which was approximately 4 years in the preparation, and voted on by the whole community (para 6.2 page 20)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2) To protect the local environment, especially the rural landscape, historic buildings, and wildlife habitats</li> <li>3) To enhance the recreational and leisure facilities of the village, especially for young people and to create a central hub site featuring these and other facilities</li> <li>6) To improve the village environment by appropriate enhancements to landscaping and existing features, provision of new green open spaces and enhancement of existing ones, including new tree planting</li> </ol> <p><b>And alongside these are Aims and ethos of the ‘Friends of Canada Woods and Community Park’ Community Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To regenerate the woodland and promote healthy growth for future generations to enjoy</li> <li>• To provide an accessible and inclusive woodland space for the community</li> <li>• To provide a useable space for schools and community projects</li> <li>• To provide a community space on the amenity land adjoining Canada Woods known as Community Park</li> <li>• To generate a positive outcome from a two-year pandemic</li> <li>• To engage a volunteer network for ongoing woodland and amenity land management to work alongside the Parish Council</li> </ul>

Bearing in mind these aims, vision, and objectives for Community Park, we will now try to respond to the requests that have been made, and the other questions asked prior to the meeting, which will be answered in the order that they were received:

Before we start, just to mention that we received comments and or questions from 16 sources - 7 of which were against the proposal and raised a number of comments and questions, and 9 of which appeared to be in favour of the proposal, making comments and/or offering support. Unless we want to be here for the rest of the night, we won't be able to cover every single question that has been asked now, rather we will be focusing on what appears to be the most relevant and frequently asked questions. Answers to all the questions submitted, and comments made, will be published on the Parish Council website as a supporting document with the minutes from the Parish Council meeting.

### CHANGE TO SLIDE 10

- 1) **How has the Orchard been funded** – 5 of the trees were awarded to the Community Group as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tree Council plant a tree in '73 campaign, and the remaining trees and costs of the project will be funded through a grant obtained by the local Tree Wardens from the Tree Council's 'Branching Out' Fund – there has been no cost to the Parish Council for this project
- 2) **What will happen to the funding appropriated to the orchard if it does not proceed** – Under the criteria for the grant awarded, the Parish Council pays the invoices for the trees and other items approved by the Tree Council for the Orchard, and then after the trees have been planted with help from members of the local community a claim will be submitted to the Tree Council for re-imburement of the funds spent – so in answer to the question, if the Orchard does not proceed and the trees are not planted, the Parish Council would not be re-imbursed for the money already spent (approx. £1,300)
- 3) **What benefits would the Orchard provide in terms of community activities, local schools and biodiversity** – The Orchard will provide a wide variety of benefits -  
**Community activities:** Orchards have played an important role in Communities for centuries, providing a focal point, a gathering space, a place where people and nature can successfully work together, with the bonus of a tasty treat each year. They can be used for community activities such as apple days, open air plays, picnics, storytelling, events or festivals or as a green haven in which to relax and unwind.  
**Local schools:** It is anticipated that the tree wardens would lead a variety of educational and fun sessions

**Biodiversity:** An immense amount of thought and effort went into the recent thinning of Canada Woods to increase biodiversity and secure the future of the woodland for generations to come with a structured management plan. In the 6 months following the felling works, the woodland and the surrounding environment has come alive! birds and mammals are back, a pair of nesting buzzards not seen for years, owls and woodpeckers have returned, and there were even ducks spotted on the river a couple of weeks ago. In 2007, traditional orchards were designated as a priority habitat in the 'UK Biodiversity Action Plan' because of the variety of flora and fauna that can be supported by this environment, as well as insects, birds, bees, bats, foxes, and small mammals. Orchards can protect bumblebees simply by creating a habitat for them to exist.

- 4) **How will the public access the Orchard site** – The area can be approached from both ends via footpath MLAV2, and will have unrestricted access. At the Parish Council meeting held last month the Community Group made a request to the Parish Council to submit a funding request to Wiltshire Council's LHFIG committee on their behalf to improve the accessibility along the section of footpath from Grove Road to Community Park, which was duly approved.
- 5) **Petition request for a halt in any further progress with the Community Orchard whilst a transparent consultation with the parishioners is conducted** – Over the last three years there have been many attempts to engage with our community. In some cases circumstances failed us in engaging the community, and in some cases, the community failed to engage with us. Despite the failures however, the list of ideas for Community Park continues to grow and is as diverse as our community itself (currently 35 ideas). Thinking back to the list of ideas that have already been put forward, could we please respectfully ask if the outcomes from any further consultation is likely to be significantly different from that already carried out?

As detailed in the article in last month's magazine, the Community Group are always happy to accept volunteers, along with suggestions and ideas for the area, which can also be sent directly to the Parish Council at any time. There will also be the opportunity for future community engagement at the Annual Parish Meeting etc.

As evidenced by some of the comments we have received, and we perhaps suggest, some of the people who refused to sign the petition, there are those in the community that are in favour of the Community Orchard, as well as those against it.

As a Parish Council we need to look at the bigger picture, refer back to the aims and objectives set out in the Neighbourhood Plan for our Green Spaces, and make a decision based on what is believed to be in the best interests of the whole community.

Having seen the plans for the Community Orchard, hopefully we have been able to allay fears that there will be little, or no space left in Community Park for children to play after the Orchard is planted. We sincerely expect, and hope, that the Orchard, and any other features that may be added in the future will only go to enhance the play experience for the children.

#### **CHANGE TO SLIDE 11**

- 6) **Petition request that any future plans for the amenity land at Community Park must incorporate the wishes of the parishioners, whom will be consulted continually as planning for the area changes and progresses** – Whilst in an ideal world this may seem the best thing to do, continuous consultation of this nature isn't always well received. Experience from the extensive consultation carried out when developing the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrated that as time went on community interest tended to dwindle. Whilst we acknowledge the efforts undertaken in promoting the petition which generated the high response rate from the local community, we also should perhaps recognise that many of the signatures were obtained by knocking on peoples doors and engaging directly with them, which just wouldn't be practical to do on a continual basis. Carrying out the level of consultation requested by the petition as the area changes and progresses, would likely take a considerable amount of time, and it is often the case that when funding opportunities do arise, they will have quite a limited time period in which applications can be submitted, and it would be a shame to miss any such opportunities. Having the orchard in situ, will open the way for additional funding opportunities - to perhaps improve the condition of the footpaths around the woods, fund community events, or to progress with any other possible projects that might come forward for Canada Woods or Community Park.

An alternative proposal to that of the continual community engagement as requested in the petition could be - that any ideas the Community Group may wish to progress i.e. ideas which will have already been put forward by the local community, could be detailed on the agenda for the Parish Council meeting at which they are due to be considered, along with an accompanying briefing sheet. This would then give members of the public the opportunity to either send their comments to the Parish Council prior to the meeting or to speak during the meeting itself. The meeting agendas are published in advance on the Parish Council website, notice board and Facebook page, giving everyone in the village the opportunity to stay informed and have an input into the discussion should they so wish.

- 7) **Suitability of the site for a Community Orchard** - We acknowledge that the site has been waterlogged recently, but this is the case with many areas of land at the moment due to the exceptionally high rainfall in February. A Wiltshire Council Tree Officer visited Community

	<p>Park on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December to assess the suitability for its use as a Community Orchard and was supportive of the idea. Discussions were held at the time regarding the water table and soil samples revealed that whilst it was wet on the surface, the ground was dryer further down. During the soil testing carried out in December Twenty holes, 8” deep, and 6” square were dug across the site. The first 2” of each sample were then discarded and the rest put in a bucket, where all the samples were mixed together, and sample pots filled. Soil from this depth was found to be better draining. The results from the soil testing indicated that subject to some additional support for the new trees, the soil was suitable for the fruit trees proposed.</p> <p>8) <b>Who will be responsible for the upkeep of the Community Orchard?</b> - The’ Friends of Canada Woods and Community Park’ Community Group, with the support of the Tree Wardens and volunteers, will be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the trees. Nineteen people put their names down to help with the Community Orchard during the recent Facebook poll. The Parish Council has been, and will remain responsible for any costs incurred for mowing the grass etc.</p> <p>9) <b>Why Community Park for the Community Orchard?</b> - Part of the Tree Warden’s role is to identify land for planting, and there are so many benefits to the Orchard being at Community Park. It is considered to be the ideal position, having its own water source, being centrally located, and is the perfect option for biodiversity, education, shelter, funding, community events, and to improve this underused area of amenity land for the benefit of all.</p>
12	<p>All our Councillors join the Parish Council with a genuine interest and passion for the community that they serve and live in, and a lot of time and effort goes into researching ideas behind the scenes before any proposals are put forward at Parish Council meetings. Whilst it can be difficult to make a decision, knowing that some parishioners will agree with it, and that others may not, Councillors need to be impartial, and step back to consider what is in the best interests of the community as a whole. Other improvements and work carried out within Canada Woods and the surrounding area have not always been well received during the planning stages, but we hope you will agree that 6 months on, the whole area is benefiting from the work undertaken. It is with the same vision and expectation that we sincerely hope the Community Orchard will further enhance this area, by encouraging and supporting other insects and mammals, whilst at the same time providing a valuable community asset for the enjoyment of all ages, for generations to come - Thank you.</p>